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SUBJECT: SPECIAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PRT TEAM LEADERS

¶1. This is an action request. Embassy Baghdad's Office of Provincial Affairs (OPA) requests that FSI/NFATC in consultation with NEA develop a special 3-5 day course on "Leading Diverse Teams in Conflict Zones" for senior and FS-01 officers assigned to Team Leader positions in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq. The course also could be adapted for officers assigned to leadership positions in Afghanistan PRTs and in other conflict zones as well.

¶2. There are currently 26 PRTs in Iraq headed by senior officers and FS-01s who must manage and lead civilian teams partnered with military brigades, to accomplish the mission of helping to build Iraqi provincial officials' capacity to govern. The teams include professionals from State, USAID, DOD, Justice and other agencies, "3161" direct-hire subject matter experts, bilingual-bicultural advisers, and third country nationals. Despite undeniable security improvements, service in Iraq remains service in a war zone. Teams are under constant threat of explosive, mortar or small arms attacks, and their travel is limited to official business in armored convoys. Work hours are long and team members live in spartan environments with little privacy and few off-duty options. Although the team leaders are experienced FSOs capable of managing their mission and mentoring their staffs, few team leaders have exercised such complex responsibilities in such dangerous circumstances.

¶3. Team Leaders currently are required to take two NFATC courses before arriving in Baghdad: the week-long PRT course and the two-week FACT course. Neither of those courses, however, prepares them for the special demands they will face as leaders in a high-stress, high ambiguity conflict zone.

¶4. Over and above the day-to-day difficulties of capacity-building and development assistance work -- for which most Foreign Service officers are not trained, the team leaders must direct the work of diverse professionals from different backgrounds, many of whom have never worked for the State Department. The administrative, contracting, hiring authority and logistical rules guiding operations in the PRTs are also remarkably intricate.

¶5. OPA had discussed development of a PRT leadership course with FSI/NFATC trainers Ray Leki and Christine Powers during their visit to Baghdad in February 2009. Leki and Powers led a session at the Quarterly Team Leaders' Conference.

¶6. The Obama Administration has made clear that the PRT program remains one of its highest priorities for Iraq. NEA projects continuation of PRTs in Iraq at least through December 2011.

¶7. Embassy Baghdad now asks that FSI/NFATC work with NEA to develop a 3-5 day version of the Senior Leadership Training course that would be geared toward leading diverse teams in conflict zones. Embassy Baghdad would recommend that all incoming officers assigned to lead PRTs in Iraq be required to take the course. Ideally, the course would include modules on:

- understanding styles of leadership;
- representing the PRT and the USG to Iraqis, the UN and other foreign entities;
- managing and leading in a multi-national, multi-cultural, multi-organization environment;
- supervising and leading diverse multi-cultural, interagency and interdisciplinary teams;
- working with the military, USAID, the United Nations, development NGOs, and other experts;
- understanding the supervisory and evaluation requirements for FSOs, Civil Service detailees, "3161s," and other categories of

employee;

- dealing with EEO, harassment, disciplinary and other interpersonal issues in a high-stress environment;
- managing up and around, working with challenging peers,
- managing up and around, working with challenging peers, colleagues, bosses and subordinates; and
- motivating self and others.

18. In an increasingly "expeditionary" Foreign Service, diplomats would benefit from the focus and preparation afforded by this kind of leadership training course. Looking beyond the Team Leaders assigned to PRTs in Iraq, the course would be relevant for those officers assigned to leadership positions in Afghan PRTs or possibly in other conflict zones.

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